NARRATOR I grew up in a quiet little home in Dunwoody, nearby the public high school and the library. We were in the suburbs, but my family mostly kept to ourselves. To this day, I only know a handful of people who lived in the houses nearby us. My name is Marissa Stacholy, but in the beginning of high school I started to go by Ruby to avoid the confusion of sharing the same name as three other girls (all of whom dropped out, but that is another story.) I am Cuban and double Italian (both Mom and Dad have Italian ancestors.) Dad spent his first six years in Cuba, and Mom’s grandparents arrived on a boat when they were still young. Before I reached high school, maybe when I was eight years old, my brother and I spent all our time with our across-the-street neighbors, Durham and Reagan. Reagan was a baby, so we really didn’t interact with her much. But we would always play outside with Durham. He had gone to a public school his whole life, and my brother and I to an expensive private school, so we always viewed ourselves as superior and smarter. For a while, the three of us were inseparable, playing the wildest of games. I would always come up with them because I lived in a fantasy world. I refused to believe reality existed.

One day, my brother and I were feeling very bored, so we went across the street after our parents gave us the go-ahead.

RUBY (*knocking on a door*) Can Durham come out and play?

DURHAM’s MOTHER Durham! Your friends are here!

DURHAM Let’s go to the backyard!

NARRATOR And so we followed him out back. Woah! He had a giant trampoline now! We spent every day then and since playing on that trampoline. Those were simpler times. Eventually, he would grow into a bully, and later I would find out it was because he had a crush on me. But I didn’t have a crush on him because he was a bully, so we stopped playing together after that.

Now things are different. I’m older, in college, and I understand the joy of teasing someone you like. I can no longer play every day because I have my studies to keep me occupied. I have dark circles under my eyes and stress in my shoulder. I still wish I could live in a fantasy world, but I don’t have the time to imagine anymore. I’m sad about that, but I guess it’s just a part of growing up.